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A
LETTER
TO A
FRIEND,

Occasioned by my

Lord Howard of Escrick's
LETTER
TO HIS
FRIEND,

With his *Protestation* at the receiving the Blessed Sacrament in
the Tower, July 3. 1681.

S I R,

THough I have never received a Line from you these ten years,
or know whether you have so much as heard of the late
Imprisonment of the great *Triumvirate*, viz. Two *Protestant*
Lords and a *Joyner*, much less read the Idle Stuff with
which they or their Friends have Pestered the Town in their Vindica-
tion; yet because it is the new way of telling all the world what we
please, and especially our Sir Pol. Conceits of Affairs of State, by pre-
tending to whisper 'em only to a Friend in a Corner, I must beg your
leave to write now to you, that this Sheet of mine too may come out
with the Title of a Letter to a Friend: Wherein I shall give you some
account of a Paper, called, *A Letter of my Lord Howard of Escrick to*
his Friend, together with his Protestation at his receiving the Blessed
Communion in the Tower.

The Publisher of this Letter and *Protestation* of my Lords, Ushers it
in with an Harangue of his own, and very gravely tells us. *That there*
are two times in which his Charity does oblige him to think men, (especially
such as stile themselves Christians,) dare not speak any thing deviating from
Truth, to wit, at their approach to Death, and to Gods Holy Table. In-
deed

deed I can't choose but be very much inclin'd to his Charitable opinion, and must needs think it very hard that any person, especially if he has been of a Conversation void of Offence towards God and towards man, and of a Life that might testify for him, that he did not only *style himself* a Christian, but was really so; that such a one, I say, should not be believed in either of these two Circumstances: But I am as sure that it is very reasonable, that what is utter'd in the very moment of Death, with all the circumstances that usually attend such Protestations, ought to carry much greater force than that which is never so Religiously protested at the receiving of the Communion, where the hopes of avoiding punishment by Swearing off a Guilt that is Capital, and the distance of the Judgment that is threatned this Violation, and perhaps the disbelief of any future punishment for it at all, may be very strong Inducements to any person in these Circumstances to venture to approach this Holy Table with a Lye in his Mouth: especially if his Life and Conversation has been such, and particularly his Reverence for this Holy Sacrament at other times so little, as may give but very small grounds of Credibility to his Protestations at the same Holy Sacrament, when either to serve his Interest, or to save his Life they are made; and how far this may concern our Noble Protestor, we shall shortly enquire. If then the Scribler that tells us, *There are two times in which we are chiefly to believe men*; tells us, as he does immediately after; that for all this he can't believe what has been so solemnly asserted by several Gentlemen at one of these his two times, and that which of the two is least lyable to suspicion of Falshood; he cannot sure be offended if some persons are as hard of belief to what is as solemnly Protested at the other: And particularly by my Lord Howard, if some reasons appear that may very well justify the incredulity that suspects this Honourable Lords Declaration.

And first let People very well consider the last Confession of *Fitz-Harris*, so deliberately written, each Period so Religiously Sworn to upon his Knees, and with such dreadful Imprecations own'd and asserted for Truth, both at his Penning it, and at the last moment of his Life, without any hopes of Pardon upon Earth, or any possibility of Pardon in Heaven, if he should die with a Lye in in his Mouth; and then let them tell me which Protestation ought to have greatest weight, that of a Dying Penitent, or such a Communicant. Sure if Oaths and Protestations make men either Innocent or Guilty, my Lord Howard's and this being compar'd by Impartial Judges, it will go very hard on the Peers side. But alas! there are other Testimonies, Living Witnesses which in these Cases are to make good such a Charge as is laid to his Lordship before that Tribunal whose Justice is not here to be Forestal'd: And therefore tis the Protestations on both sides, and the Solemnity of them that is fittest for us to examine. In a word then, if Mr. *Fitz-harrys* his Declaration be true, my Lord Howard's, (at least the first part of it) is false. For the last part of it, *viz. That he never was in that house in Shandois Street, wöere the said Fitz-Harrys was taken,*
and

and where his Wife soon after was brought to Bed, save only once in the company of a Lady, &c. It may perhaps be true; but here is withal a Mental Reservation, as had we no other grounds, might make us suspect all the rest he labours to perswade us: For perhaps that Lady his Lordship speaks of can attest, and I am sure several others can, that he has not been once or twice, but very frequently, at divers times, not only in publick at Dinners and Suppers, but also privately with *Fitz-Harrys*; not indeed *in that House wherein he was taken, and wherein his Wife soon after was brought to Bed*, as his Lordship so cautiously protests, but in that House where he formerly lived, Mr. *Fitz-Harrys* having removed from that to another not many doors distant a little while before he was apprehended.

I beseech you, my Lord, why all this Caution? Why so tender of naming *Fitz-Harrys* his House, without adding these qualities to it; *wherein he was taken, and wherein his Wife was brought to bed*? Was it not to evade the including the other House of Mr. *Fitz-Harrys* his in *Shandois-street*, where he and your Lordship have sate up almost whole nights together, with all the privacy imaginable, with no ill intention alas! only to smok an innocent Pipe, and have a little indifferent chat by your selves, or so? Or were you affraid that, without this Restriction, you might be in danger of swearing that you had not been above once in your whole Life at *your own House*. Your own House, my Lord, which entertained *Fitz-Harrys* so long, almost a whole Winter, that by an easie figure it might be called Mr. *Fitz-Harris* his House, or at least Mr. *Fitz-Harris* his Lodgings. Or was this mighty care and exactness used to make people believe that you really valu'd what you swore? Was that the Policy? to make a mental Reservation on purpose to be found out? that the World might think your Conscience a little more scrupulous, and your Veneration for a Sacrament somewhat greater, than when your Lordship administred it your self in *Lambs-wool*? Indeed you would put this upon us, and therefore you tell us in your Letter how *solemnly* this Protestation was made, *under the most sacred ties of Religion*. But, my Lord, how shall we be assured that this Protestation with you signifies any more, than if it had been *as solemnly made under the most sacred ties of Apples and Ale*? Or how could you ever hope that one who had so profan'd this most Holy Mystery of our Religion, so expos'd our Blessed Saviour, and put him to a more infamous and open shame than ever the malice of the *Jews* his Crucifiers could reach at, should yet get any Credit to his Protestations by that Sacrament which himself has so notoriously violated? No, my Lord, whatever Judgments are in store for the Profaners of our most Sacred Rites, and the Contemners of the very Badge and Seal of our Holy Religion in the World to come, this we are certain is the natural Punishment of such an Impiety in this World, and the greatest Justice too that can possibly be, That he who has thus made a mock of all that is Sacred, should never, in his greatest extremities, be believed, by pretending a Reverence to that Mystery which he has so Atheistically abus'd,

abus'd, or have any benefit from that Grace of God which he has turn'd into Wantonness.

What good Christian now can be so uncharitable as to doubt of the Verity of my Lord *Howard's* Protestation? What Infidel among us can withstand the force of this *Sacramental Oath* made as his friend tells you (p. 2.) by one whose Principles will not allow the least grain of *Equivocation*, either with God or man; and whose Honour and Quality, Behaviour and Conversation strongly do assert the Credibility of his Testimony. O Rhetorick! And have they not strongly asserted indeed? Has not one only Instance of his Principles, his Behaviour and Conversation left us out of all possibility of doubting his Truth? This very single Action of his whole Life, this playing the Priest over a Bowl of consecrated *Lambs-wool*, is enough to convince us of it. Why then should we search into the whole course of his Conversation and Behaviour for further Arguments? Why should we pursue this Honourable Peer through all the Scenes of as infamous a Life as almost is to be found among a whole pack of Evidences? What need we follow him through his Brokers Shop into his sanctified Tub, from cheating men of their Money, to gulling them of their Souls? Why should we hunt him through all the Sects of Religions which he has herded amongst, without having any at all himself, like the *Polypus* that has no Colour of his own, but takes that of the next stone he sticks to? Why should we search into his secret Cabals with Rascals, from the highest to the vilest Quality, all which, in a more proper place shall shortly come to light? Why should we pry into the reason of his own Discontents, or his factious improving those of all others he could meet with; his perpetual familiarity with *Fitz-Hays*, whom by his Protestation he would insinuate he was scarce acquainted with; his protesting for him whilst he liv'd, and protesting against him now he's dead? What need, I say, is there of these, or of infinite other Instances of this kind, to gain a Reputation to his Oath at the *Sacrament*? We will not (like his Friend the Publisher) have his Credibility in this Case depend on such general Arguments as the course of his Life does afford. No, certainly the value he has for the Blessed Sacrament is to be estimated from that Action of his Life which more particularly relates thereto. And that having been sufficiently insisted upon, we shall leave the Reader to guess at all the rest of the motives of Credibility which his Friend tells us may be drawn from the whole tenour of his Behaviour and Conversation by this one which we have produced, and then desire him to believe as much of this Protestation even as my good Protestant Lord himself that made it.